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seem to look upon it as the most ordinary thing in the world and to concentrate all their attention on the rifle-fire which, at intervals, proceeds from the other side. The noise of war has put a sudden end to all the bickering and squabbling, and all the troubles of the day, now nearly at its close, seem to be forgotten. Everyone lets himself go in tales of war, we are all carried away by our imagination, and in a gentle, happy and friendly mood we ascend the mountain path which leads us away from our fellow men in the hot wādī below. The path again leads along the safe side of the spur and, at this point, is overhung by a long piece of rock, under which travellers are in the habit of bivouacking. It is too late to reach the *djōl* before dark, so we decide to stay here and to go on the following morning as quickly as possible to the next *neqāba*[1] in the hope of finding water there. We have just enough left for a pot of tea and we are parched with thirst, but no one can be induced to return to ᶜAmd to fetch water. As we look down from the steep rocky slopes into the wādī far below us we are filled with great rejoicing. ᶜAmd is still visible just at the bend, and we are well away from the wearisome negotiations with the people there and from their rather intrusive interest in us. Also the protecting rock-wall is between us and enemy territory. To-night we are free and alone, far above men, looking out, from our shelf of rock, right to the eternal kingdom of the stars.

Sayyid el-ᶜĒderūs, our *siyāra*[2], relates how, a short time ago, sharp-shooters with mausers succeeded in sniping three men on this very zigzag path. It is the custom towards the close of day to exchange a few shots from the fortified watch-towers, as if to show that guard is being kept. Perhaps we had underestimated the danger again on this occasion.

Little Sayyid Muḥammad bin ᶜAlī felt quite at home in his narrow camp in the rocks on the edge of the precipice. He had

[1] See p. 52.

[2] A *siyāra* (سيارة) is a guide in Bedouin territory, who makes possible safe travelling in the area of his tribe.

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a good tuck-in to our biscuits — to him something wonderful — and then curled up peacefully to sleep on his hard bed of rock. In the middle of the night cries reached us from the plain below: Muḥammad bin ᶜAlī's mother was very anxious about her truant son and kept up a continuous moan: *"Yā waladī, yā waladī!"* (Oh, my son!), nor did she stop till some members of the family came up the mountain with a donkey to fetch the little chap home. She did not seem to place much trust in her adventurous husband. The relief expedition got up to us safely, but dared not make the dangerous return by night. Towards day-break Sayyid ᶜAlī el-ᶜAṭṭās, with his little son sitting proudly on the donkey, returned to Wādī ᶜAmd, and we went on upwards to the plateau of the Deyyin Bedouins, with the primary object of finding water for ourselves and our camels.

2. TREKKING OVER THE DJÖL AGAIN.

Our escort was now reduced to two sayyids. One was for the camels and he knew the way although he had been over it only once in his life; the other, Sayyid el-ᶜEderūs, a ready-witted and talkative man, was responsible for our safety and was to be the intermediary in our relations with the Deyyin Bedouins. These latter are very primitive and so might be dangerous for strangers travelling alone. We had met their old shēkh, ᶜUthmān, in the *Maṣnaᶜa* of Dōᶜan with Governor Bā Ṣurra, and Von Wissmann had taken advantage of the occasion to pick up information from him about his territory and tribe and to put out feelers as to whether a visit to their headquarters at er-Rēda would be welcomed. Thereupon the old shēkh had invited us to come and had even promised to let us see his still very wild country.[1] Thus, much depended upon whether we should find the chief of the Deyyin himself in er-Rēda.

[1] See p. 66 *sq.*